

MEMOIRS

FOR THE

INGENIOUS.

CONTAINING

Several Curious Observations in *Philosophy*,
Mathematicks, *Physick*, *History*, *Philology*, and
other Arts and Sciences.

IN

Miscellaneous Letters.

By J. DE LA CROSE, Eccl. Angl. Presb.

OCTOBER, 1693.

To be continued Monthly.

VOL. I.

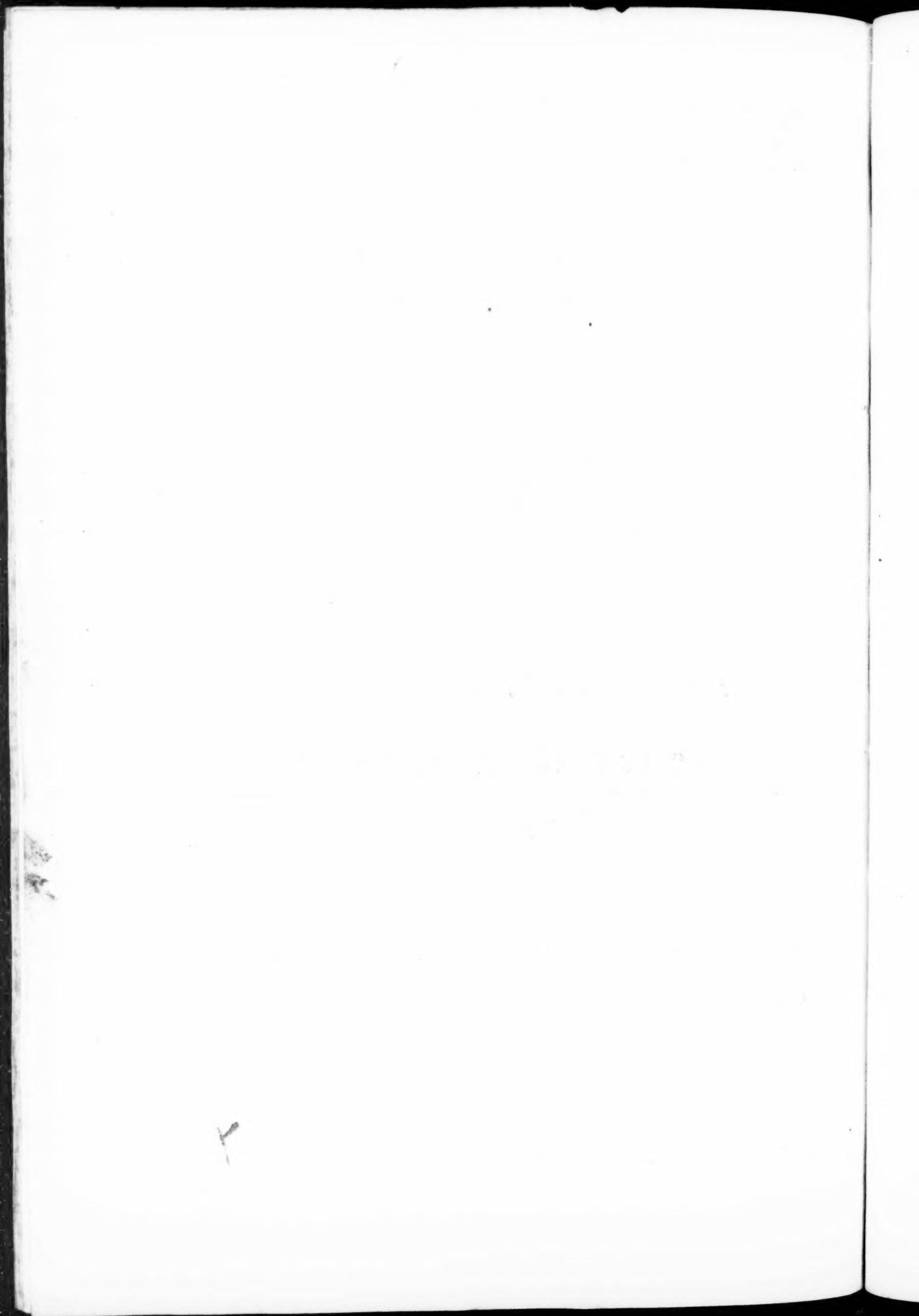
*Non semper ea sunt quæ videntur, decipit
Frons prima multos, rara mens intelligit,
Quod interiore condidit curâ angulo.*

Phæd. Tr. l. 1. 4.

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Memoirs for the Ingenious.

OCTOBER, 1693.

LETTER XL.

To the Right Reverend Father in God,
Simon Lord Bishop of Ely.

ARGUMENT.

Occasion of this Letter. Why the Author does not make use of the Argument drawn from Miracles, to demonstrate the truth of the Christian Religion. Another Demonstration founded upon 13 Postulates containing undeniable Matters of Fact. That the three first Centuries, during which Christianity was establish'd, were the learnedst of all Antiquity. That Our Lord and his Apostles could be no Deceivers. That no private Correspondence can be imagin'd betwixt our Saviour and the Heads of the Jews That no happy circumstances can have mov'd him to assume to himself the quality of the Messiah. That he could not have succeeded in the attempt. That the first Christians were neither Beggars nor Fools, but honest and sensible men. Of Mahomet. Of the Patriarchs of the Monks. That Deists deserve to be punish't as infamous Calumniators, and publick Disturbers.

My Lord,

A Superstitious scrupulosity can oft do as much hurt to Religion, as the daring boldness of those petulant Spirits, who will

confine the infinite Majesty within the narrow reach of their understanding; or limit the unsearchable Springs of the Almighty's Providence, to the weak power of their frail Machin. This your Lordship was sensible of, when you publish'd in *English* that incomparable Treatise of *Grotius*, concerning the Truth of the Christian Religion, with excellent Illustrations and Additions of your own, and so many Paraphrases and Notes on several parts of the Holy Scripture; together with divers Books of Divinity and Morals. By this, as your Lordship shew'd on the one side that we are not afraid of the Objections of our Adversaries; so you made on the other the way to Salvation plainer and easier, and rendred Christianity more lovely, and if I may so speak, more adorable. And therefore none, I suppose, will find fault with me for presuming to follow so great an Example.

Our Saviour, and his Apostles after him, proved that he was the Son of God, sent by his Father to Redeem and Convert Mankind, by his Miracles, *John* v. 25, 38. *Act.* iii. 16. This was an undeniable Argument for those that heard and saw him, especially because he did such Miracles, to which no humane Art, nor even any finite Power can attain, as to tell men, and even just too, what were their thoughts, *John* i. 48, 49. For no finite Spirit can work upon another (a) that is in the state of Tryal, or in the love of God, so far as to be conscious of its thoughts, without Gods leave or express order.

(a) See
Letter
xxxvii.

But for us who live 16 or 17 hundred years after, as Miracles are of themselves extraordinary and incredible things, and those of our Saviour are not distinctly related by any other Author besides his own Disciples, whom the incredulous suspect, as tho they had spoken of him in too high terms, these Miracles cannot be a direct proof, since not one that believes them doubts of Christ's Mission and Divinity. Let's then take another course, and suppose only such matters of fact as are confest on all hands.

1. That there has been such a man as *Jesus of Nazareth*, born in *Judea*, under the Empire of *Augustus* and the Reign of *Herod*; in some of the years of *Rome*, betwixt 748 and 753.

2. That he lived there 33 years and a half, according to the common opinion, or 38 years, as Mr. *Dodwel* pretends; and was much famous and followed by many people, the 3 or 4 last years of his life.

3. That at last all his Followers, either forsaking him, hiding themselves, or not daring to appear in his behalf, he was taken up and hanged on a Cross.

4. That after his Death some of his Disciples took heart again and preached his Doctrin so successfully, that within 40 years they

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converted great numbers of *Jews*, and within 200 years after a good part, and I may say the far greater part of the *Roman* Empire, besides other Converts in *Persia*, *India*, &c.

5. That Christ's Apostles were good, honest and sensible men, but not extraordinary Learned and Eloquent.

6. That there appears however in their Writings an uncommon sort of Wisdom, consisting in an exceeding Zeal for the spreading of what they conceiv'd to be Truth and Virtue, and in a particular Skill to direct Men to the way of their eternal Salvation.

7. That such a Style cannot be affected: That is, that the Apostles could not be Learn'd and shrew'd Politicians, who hid their natural and acquir'd parts under a pretended simplicity. For no Man can perpetually disguise his Style and Manners; the Truth would have appear'd through some cleft, and have betray'd the whole Intrigue.

8. The Writings ascrib'd to the first Disciples of our Saviour, at least the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, and the Epistles of *St. Paul*, are really theirs. For this may be proved by an uninterrupted Tradition, as well and better than that *Virgil* has written the *Aeneid*, *Cicero* the Oration *pro M. Marcello*, &c.

9. Our Saviour, his Apostles, and most of his first Disciples, were of the common sort of Men, and rather Poor than Rich.

10. The Christian Religion has not got footing by force of Arms, or by Intrigues of State, for its Professors were expos'd to the Persecution of the *Roman* Emperors during 300 years, if not actually under it; and favour'd by no Nation nor Sect, but equally hated by *Jewish* and *Heathen* Priests, by Rabbies and Philosophers, by *Pharisees* and *Stoicks*, by *Sadducees* and *Epicures*.

11. Christianity does not flatter any passions, vices, or prejudices. Contrariwise, it forbids Luxury, Covetousness, Ambition, Wrath, the excess of all Pleasures, and even to better our condition by unlawful means. It commands to obey our Superiors, to prefer the profession of the Truth to every thing, and to our very Lives, to submit our Reason to the Divine Revelation, &c.

12. As the *Roman* Empire was in its strength from the Birth of our Saviour to the Conversion of the Emperor *Constantine*, so those three Centuries are reckon'd the most Learn'd of all Antiquity. Now an Age is esteem'd Learn'd, not when some Ingenious men are to be met with here and there, for that was ever so; but when the common sort of People has a competent deal of knowledge, which appears by the smoothness and elegance of the Tongues they speak, the Arts that flourish among them, and are brought every

day to a greater perfection, the accuracy of Style in most part of Writers, their checking and ridiculing vulgar Errors without any molestation, &c. All the Learn'd Criticks agree, That since the *Babylonian Captivity*, the *Jews* have cultivated Sciences more than ever; and to convince the Reader of it, I need only to make him remember, 1. That they never fell afterwards into Idolatry. 2. That the Doctrins of a Resurrection and future State were then taught more generally and plainer than before. As to the Heathens in *Cicero's* time, Prodigies, Auguries, Divinations, Oracles that were so frequent and so much in Request before, began to grow out of fashion; and when *Augustus* had restor'd Peace to the World, Oracles became quite silent, either because the New-born Saviour forbad 'em to speak, as some Divines use to say, or that People grew too wary to be impos'd upon. Moreover, Ingenious men took oft the Liberty to ridicule the receiv'd Religion, as does *Horatius* in the following Verses, which are a Sarcastm of Idolatry in general, tho they seem only to deride *Priape's* Worship.

*Olim truncus eram ficulnus, inutile lignum;
Cum faber incertus scamnum faceret ne Priapum,
Maluit esse Deum: Deus inde ego, furum, aviumque
Maxima formido.*

Formerly I was the stump of a Fig tree, an insignificant piece of Wood; when a Carpenter advising by himself whether he should make a Bench or *Priape*, chose to make a God of it. Thence I was a God, the great terror of Thieves and Birds. Confer *Isa. xlv. 15.* for 'tis a pleasure to see that even Jewish Prophets could scarce deride Idolatry more sarcastically than the Heathen Poets.

But lest it should be said that *Horace* was an Epicure, let's hear the Wise and Religious *Virgil*.

*Postquam Res Asiae, Priamique evertere gentem
Immeritum visum superis.*

After the Gods had thought fit to ruin the Affairs of Asia, and the Family of *Priam* without cause. Certainly if the Poet did not design to ridicule his own Religion, he had forgot the Notions of common sense, which teach us that the Sovereign Governor of the World must needs be a Being full of Goodness, and incapable of Injustice.

Ovid seems to have undertaken his *Metamorphoses*, on purpose to ridicule the Pagan Divinity, which was kept secret amongst the Priests.

Priests. For to publish such absurd Mysteries, is to expose them to the scorn of the Vulgar. And I am apt to think, that tho there are throughout the Writing; of the Greek and Latin Poets several allusions to that Fabulous Theology, yet not one before him had presum'd to give out a System of the whole. This doubtless is the cause of that mighty boast by which he concludes his Work,

*Famque opus exegi, quod nec Jovis ira, nec ignes,
Nec poterit ferrum, nec edax abolere Vetustas.*

I have finish'd a work, which neither Jupiter's Anger, nor Fire, nor Sword, nor the All-devouring Time will be able to destroy. Wherein I observe by the by, how little he values the wrath of that pretended Father of Gods and Men. *Lucian* went still farther, for he chose for the Matter of his Dialogues the most ridiculous Actions that were related of their Gods, and set them down in such a Style as was proper to inspire the utmost Contempt: But God, who knows how to turn evil to good, made use of these Atheistical Wits to prepare the way to his Gospel; for the generality of Men cannot be without Religion, and if you inspire them with a disgust of their own, they will quickly run to another. It's then an undoubted Matter of Fact, that the World was never more Learn'd than in the three first Centuries of the Church, and less susceptible of deception; and hitherto we have seen that this disposition of People favour'd the insensible increase of Christianity, which is a very favourable presumption of its Truth. Let's then proceed.

13. A Deceiver cannot succeed so far, as that his Laws and Institutions should be receiv'd through several Nations, and become in a short time the Rule of the Publick Religion and Worship, unless they flatter the Passions, Vices and Prejudices of Men, that both he and his chief Abettors be extraordinary Eloquent, or great Warriors; That they be able to carry on their Designs with Men and Money; That they be help'd either openly or privately by a powerful Faction; That they have to do with unthinking People easie to be led about; And that they built upon a giv'n Ground; that is, Upon a Receiv'd and Reverenc'd Opinion. I defie all the Incredulous Tribe to alledge the instance of a Deceiver that wanted most part of these Encouragements, and has however succeeded; whereas I could Quote great Numbers, who with all these together have been unsuccessful, or only of a short standing.

These

These Propositions are so very plain, that they need not to be prov'd, neither does the compass of these Letters allow me to do it. Those that have the least doubt about the 1, 2 and 8 Propositions, may consult your *Grotius*, and many other Books, that are, God be prais'd, common enough. And therefore an Impartial Reader will not deem me unreasonable, if I take these Propositions for *Postulates* to build on a *Demonstration of the Christian Religion*, as follows.

Christ said that he was the Messiah, the Son of God, sent from his Father to Redeem and Convert the World, and has done it accordingly, as we are taught in the New Testament; but neither Christ nor his Apostles could be Deceivers; and therefore what Christ said of himself, and his Disciples of him, is true. The *Major* is Matter of Fact; the *Minor* I prove thus. By the 13th Proposition, That a Deceiver may succeed so far, as that his Laws and Institution should be receiv'd through several Nations, and in a short time become the Rule and Standard of the Publick Religion and Worship, several things are requisite, which are not to be found either in our Saviour or his Apostles, but rather the quite contrary Qualifications. As. 1. That they should flatter the Passions, Vices and Prejudices of Men, as do Heathenism, Mahometism, and some Popish Tenets, which propose the remission of Sins by telling them to a Priest, or buying off the Punishment; whereas by the 11th Proposition, Christianity does not indulge Vices, but forbids Voluptuousness, &c.

2. It's requir'd that both the Deceiver and his Chief Abettors should be extraordinary Learn'd and Eloquent, such as the *Egyptian Priests*, *Solon*, *Lycurgus*, *Numa Pompilius*, or great Warriors, like *Nimrod*, *Mahomet* and his Successors. It's indeed said of our Saviour, that never Man spake like him; and there was also in the Apostles a sort of uncommon Wisdom. But we must consider what this Eloquence and Wisdom were. They were in our Saviour a short and ponderous way of expressing himself, a Majestick Air proceeding from the Consciousness of his own Birth and Natural Dignity, which gave an admirable weight and authority to whatever he said, though he thought not fit to unfold that Sacred Mystery, before fickle or incredulous Hearers. In the Apostles this Eloquence and Wisdom consisted in a firm persuasion of the truth of the things which they related, as having either seen or heard them from the Mouth of that Infallible Oracle, their Divine *Jesus*; and in an exceeding Zeal to propagate those truths, as being the only means to procure the eternal Salvation of Men. As for being Warriors,

Warriors, 'tis known, that neither Christ nor his first Disciples were any thing like it. That most part of the *Roman* Empire was already *Christian*, and better *Christians* than they were afterwards, when *Constantine* embrac'd the Gospel faith; which join'd to the Persecutions the Disciples of our Saviour lay so oft under, during the three first Centuries, takes away any suspicion that his Doctrine should have been establish'd by force of Arms, according to the 10th Proposition.

3. It's necessary that the Deceivers should be enabled to carry on their designs with Men and Money. As were *Nimrod*, *Mahomet*, the Caliphs of *Babylon*, the *Sultans*, the *Popes*, &c. which appears by their Wars, Croisado's, Persecutions, &c. But what signify'd twelve Fishermen, with a Tent-maker, in relation to the Conquest or Conversion of the World? See *Propos. 9.*

4. It may be imagin'd that a powerful Faction, affording a private help to a Deceiver and his few Abettors, might supply the want of Men and Money. By some such means it was that *Cromwell* got the Sovereign Power of these Isles into his Hands, being privately push'd on, by those who gap'd, as it were, at the Kings Houses and Lands, the Estates of the Nobility, and the Revenues of the Church, tho it may be doubted whether this aspiring Man drew the first Scheme of his Designs, before he was advanc'd to the Charge of Lieutenant-General of the Parliaments Army. However it be, this is certain, That his Courage, Successes, Craft and Policy, made him great numbers of Creatures and Admirers in the said Army, who were the chief Promoters of his rise.

Let's now see whether the most subtle Sophisms of Incredulity can invent any thing that hath a shew of probability to intercept the Rays of our Saviours Divinity. There were then 5 or 6 prevailing Interests in *Judea*. 1. That of the *Romans*, the Court and Courtiers call'd *Herodians*. 2. That of the Priests and Divines. 3. That of the People. 4. That of the *Pharisees*. 5. That of the *Sadducees*. And 6. That of the *Essenes*. These six different Interests may be reduc'd to two, as to Politicks and Government, viz. 1. That of the *Herodians* endeavouring to keep up the Dominion of the *Romans*, and of *Herod* under him. 2. That of the People, longing for their Ancient Kings, Liberties and Priviledges, to which Interest most of the Priests and Pharisees did covertly resort; the *Sadducees* floated betwixt both, and the *Essenes* did not meddle in the least with Affairs of State.

It's certain that *Herod* was very much hated because of its Cruelties against the Family of the *Asmoneans*, several Noblemen and Persons

Persons of Note, whom he had caus'd to be Murder'd upon light Suspensions, or to seize on their Estates. As to his Sons and Successors, as they had neither the Power nor the good Qualifications of the Father, but several of the bad, so they fell by degrees into the utmost Contempt. What belongs to the *Romans*, as no Nation, especially so proud as the *Jews* ever were, loves to be Govern'd as a Land of Conquest; it's certain that they would have been glad to be rid of that Foreign Power, which appears by their unwillingness in paying those few Taxes, which their Conquerors lay upon them, and withal by their frequent Seditions; but they had no Head to resort unto, and were too weak, and too divided to undertake a general Rise successfully.

The *Jews* read never more the H. Scriptures than at that time; but their Ambition and Pride had drawn upon them the Curse of *Isaiah* vi. 10. They saw that the time of the *Messiah's* coming was expired, because the Scepter, or the Sovereign Power of their Commonwealth, was transferr'd to a Foreign Nation, *Gen.* xlix. 10. His Family, the place of his Birth, his double Nature Humane and Divine, his Offices of King, Prophet and High-Priest, the most remarkable Actions of his Life, and his Ignominious Death, were all set down in the Prophetical Books. But their Teachers had infatuated them with this prejudice, That the *Messiah* would make himself known by his Preaching and Miracles, and having drawn by those means vast numbers of People, put himself at their head, fight and overthrow the *Romans*, and not only restore their Country to its Ancient Liberties, but even Conquer all the World, or make all other Nations their Vassals and Tributaries.

In the mean while, the *Pharisees* were in the Lurch waiting for the rise of some great Man, who would shake hands with them, take upon him the Quality of *Messiah*, behave himself, and manage the People, according to their Directions. For as they were the most powerful Faction of all, the greatest part of the Priests and *Sanhedrim* being of their Sect, and having a great influence over the Vulgar; so they expected, and, humanly speaking, with some reason too, that none should undertake the conduct of the People without consulting them. And therefore as soon as *John the Baptist* arose, they fail'd not to send Deputies unto him to know what he was, and what he pretended to? (a) and perceiving by his Answers he was not minded to follow their Advices, nor to give out himself for the *Messiah*, they began to Defame him, got him imprisoned, and at last Beheaded.

(a) *Joh.* 19, 28.

Their Embassy to S. *John* having had so ill a success, they would not expose themselves to a second affront. However, as soon as JESUS began to be follow'd and talk'd of, they fail'd not to come about him, to tempt and pump him, in order to try whether he would not be a Messiah of their own making. But when they saw that our Saviour scorn'd such base actions, that he intended nothing but the Reformation of the World, which he would have begun by themselves, then they fell at flandering and persecuting him, and, having oft attempted it in vain, to Murder him, or let him fall into a Snare; at last they seduc'd one of his Disciples, frighted the others from him, and having bought false Witnesses, deliver'd him into the hands of the *Roman* Governor.

These Holy Cheats thought to do in this a great piece of Service to their Country; for, say they, *this Man* will not consent to be King, neither is he proper with all his Wisdom to head a multitude, for he despises Riches, the Sinews of War and Government. All his Admirers and Followers will melt off, when they are weary of his Sermons, or have gotten from him what they require. Besides that, who knows whether this Virtue of Healing is a Quality inherent in him; and tho it were, it will signify very little as to shaking off the *Roman* Yoke, since he never makes use of it to punish his Enemies. And therefore the best Counsel we can take, is to deliver him as a Rebel to the *Roman* Governor, lest he be forc'd or tempted by his Followers, some day or other, to accept of the Kingly Power, and not being able to maintain himself, the *Romans* come upon us, and destroy this H. Place and our Nation, *John xi.* 47--50.

Thus Flesh and Blood are used to argue; and God knows how many *Pharisees* his adorable Son would meet with, if he came again amongst us. But to proceed. It's certain our Saviour can be no Deceiver, if there was no private agreement betwixt him and the *Pharisees*, Priests and Heads of the *Jewish* People; for how could some poor Fisher-men, and a few inconsiderable Friends or Relations, who were even afraid to acknowledge him, and whom he did not otherwise much mind; how could they give him that great Reputation, which sounded through all *Judea*? How could they entice so many Men to counterfeit the Blind, Lame, Deaf, Leprous, &c. that they might afterwards publish they had been Cur'd by him? And if all these were but Cheats, how came so many quick-sighted Enemies never to discover any of them? These two things are certain, 1. That the incredulous *Jews*, both Ancient and Modern, who have invented so many shifts to impair the

the weight of his Miracles, never contested the truth of them, but ascrib'd them to a Magical Power, or some such ridiculous Cause.
2. That it is impossible to conceive how after *Christ's* Death, the Preaching of his Disciples should have been so successful, had he not done those Miracles that are related in the Gospels, and perhaps more than are there mention'd

After all what has been said, he must be of a very strong imagination, who can still fancy any private Intelligence betwixt our Saviour and the Heads of the *Jews*. But let's give way for a moment to that ridiculous Notion: Let us suppose, that as the *Pharisees* bore, without earnest hatred or desire of revenge, all the Reproaches of our Saviour, and saw without indignation the utmost contempt he shew'd on all occasions for their Traditions and Ordinances; so on the other side, he tacitly consented to undergo the infamous and pining punishment of the Cross, on condition that they would not let him dye, but take him away betimes, that coming to himself again, it might be reported abroad he was risen from the Dead. All this we know to be false, for his side was pierced through with a Spear, and all the blood to the most serous and watry substance exhausted; after which no man can live. Besides that, the Body of *Jesus* was not carry'd very far, or out of the sight of his Enemies; but because it was a *Preparation-day*, the Evening before the great Sabbath of *Easter*, he was Buried in a new Sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid, in a Garden lying in the same place where he was crucified, John xix. 34, 41. Add to this, that his Enemies, who judg'd of others by themselves, were afraid of some Cheat, and made the Sepulchre sure, sealing the Stone, and setting a watch over it, *Matth.* xxvii. 66.

(a) *Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus.*

But tho the Narration of the Evangelists be so circumstantiated, that it leaves no room for doubt or deception, yet let us suppose that it does it. Who were the mighty men who manag'd the whole Intrigue? Two men alone (a) could not do it, it must have been a Plot of many Confederates; and those too of the first Rank and Quality. Why did they not declare for *Jesus* after his Resurrection and Ascension? The pretended Cheat could not be push'd on farther; and it had thitherto so well succeeded, that they had only publicly to acknowledge it for a continued Series of Miracles, to draw the whole Nation on their side. Then it had been an easie matter to find out some Ingenious and Courageous person to head the bewitched multitude; and since they were so prone to be deluded, to contrive Orders from Heaven, that commanded them to go and fight the *Romans*. But those very men, who wink'd at real Seditious

ditionous *Ezechias*, *Judas*, *Theudas*, who set up *Barchochab*, and so many other false *Messiah's*, persecuted the Disciples of the true Christ, when he was himself out of the reach of their fury.

If it be absurd, and altogether improbable to feign a private correspondence betwixt our Saviour and the Heads of the *Jews*, then he kept none at all with any body living, and consequently neither he, nor his Apostles, were Deceivers, but had really and immediately their Mission from Heaven. For 'tis impossible that a man, without Humane and Divine help, destitute of Riches, Power and Friends, should put into his Head to change the Religion of a whole Nation, especially such a one as was very Learn'd in its Law, and firmly believ'd it had been giv'n and establish'd by God himself, and confirm'd by many Miracles: Or if any man could be so mad, it is unconceivable how he could succeed. However, for the sake of the Truth, I am minded to be again as kind to incredulity as I can. Let's then suppose that *Jesus* by a fortunate chance being issu'd out of *David's* family, born at *Bethlehem*, and the *Jews* at that time longing for the coming of the *Messiah*, *Jesus* himself, or some of his acquaintance, who perceiv'd he was a man of parts, resolv'd to set him up for the *Messiah*. If so be, those Gentlemen were not very fit to draw up plots, or to make contrivances. For they could not be ignorant that the Priests and Pharisees were the leading-men of their Nation, and that they had prepossess'd it with that opinion, which was then generally receiv'd, *viz.* that the *Messiah* should be a King, the Restorer of their Liberty, and the Conqueror of the World. Why did they suffer him to skulk at a Carpenters shop, during 30 years? Why did they not cause him to be brought up among those great men, that he might insensibly insinuate himself into their favour? Why did they not privately convey Money into his hands, that he might be able to keep his followers together, and raise their expectations?

The supposition of any correspondence of *Jesus* with other men, being so absurd, let's now see whether he alone with the few Disciples he could get, were able to carry on the design, still supposing with the incredulous that it was a deceit: Where was the Money to buy up so many men, as testify'd that they had been cur'd at his command? For tho he left but 120 faithful Disciples, that kept constantly together, and immediately after his Resurrection and Ascension, assembled themselves, and publicly profess'd to acknowledge him for their Master: Yet it may truly be said, that during his life he had shaken the foundation of *Judaism*, or rather *Pharisaism*, through all *Palestina*, by his Preaching and Miracles, and even

through all the corners of the Earth, where the *Jews* were spread, because of the correspondence the members of that Nation ever kept together. Otherwise, if neither Christ nor his first Disciples made any Miracles, let any body tell me, how it came to pass that on the bare saying of the Apostles, that their Master was the Son of God, and risen from the dead, so many thousands of men embrac'd Christianity, forsaking such ordinances as they firmly believ'd to be of divine institution, which was own'd by their new Teachers.

And let no body say that the first Converts were a heap of poor simple Fellows, easy to be deluded; for besides that the Apostles were not very fit to it, I deny absolutely that assertion. Indeed S. Paul says to the *Corinthians*, (a) that *not many wise men after the flesh, nor many mighty, nor many noble were called*. But what are the most part of those men that go even now under the notion of learn'd men? Nothing but an inextricable Chaos of pride and prejudices. I have try'd it a thousand times, that Truth has not more dangerous enemies than great pretenders to Learning, and next to them, luxurious, lazy, and fanciful people: Whereas I have often met with persons of mean breeding, that conceiv'd at the first time such high and metaphysical speculations, as I had not been able to make apprehensible to men of a vast reading, in many conversations. The first Christians were poor; I grant it in this sense, that they were but of ordinary fortunes, or such as made not a great figure in the world; and God would have it so, lest they should be tempted to meddle with the almost continual disturbances of the *Roman* Empire, and thereby dishonour their H. Religion. However, none of 'em went a begging, or fell heavy to strangers; they had enough not only for themselves, but even to supply the necessities of those whom the persecution of their enemies forc'd to fly from place to place.

All this consider'd, I can hardly conceive how some ignorant and prophane men can go to that excess of impudence as to make an odious comparison betwixt Christ and Mahomet. Mahomet, I say, who owes his rise and the extent of his Religion to the means of his Wife, the silliness of his Country-men the *Arabs*, the shrewdness of two (a) Arch-hereticks, the weakness of the *Greek* Emperours, and the valour of his Captains, especially his first Successors (b). His *Alcoran* is the greatest piece of nonsense I ever read, but 'tis written in good *Arab*, and therefore it was fit for the purpose.

(a) *Sergius*
a *Nestorian*,
and *Baiyas*
a *Jacobite*.
(b) *Aly*,
Abukeker,
Omar and
Odman.

*Omnia enim stolidi magis admirantur amantque,
Inversis quæ sub verbis latitantia cernunt;*

Veraque

*Veraque constituent belle qua tangere possunt
Aures, & lepido qua sunt fucata sonore.*

Lucret. l. i.

I supersede speaking of his Sham-miracles, that are but ridiculous stories, as the Half-moon that fell into his hands; or childish tricks, as the Angel *Gabriel* that came in the form of a Dove, whispering to him I know not what mysteries, whilst he was in his fits of the Falling-sickness. Had I liv'd in his time, and found a fair opportunity, I would have kill'd the pretended Angel, and there had past, I am sure, a considerable time, before another had been so well taught. But I extremely pity the poor wretch, whom he entic'd to descend into a pit, and to cry, whilst he was passing, *Mahomet is the great Prophet sent from God*; but then caus'd the Pit to be immediately fill'd up with Stones, and the credulous fool to be murther'd there, lest at some time or other he should discover the Cheat.

I shall not insist upon his allowing Poligamy, and preaching a voluptuous Paradise; but only observe, that as true *Christianity* is the Religion of the Spirit, the most pure and sublime Philosophy that can be conceiv'd, or the highest reach of sound and enlighten'd Reason; so *Mahometanism* is the grossest and most impure mixture which flesh and blood, or passions and prejudices can make up, in counterfeiting the worship of God. There is not one Metaphysical notion in that whole system, save that of the Unity of God, and that of the Stoick *fatum*, the former of which that Impostor kept, because it was the current Doctrine of all the world, and the second he renewed to encourage and harden his Souldiers, that they might willingly undergo all manner of dangers; but he renewed it upon his bare authority, without giving any reason for it, and so as he teaches it, it is utterly false and detestable, since from thence it plainly follows that there is neither liberty nor religion, neither future reward nor punishment.

As to the Patriarchs of the Monks, their progresses have nothing surprizing in them; for besides that they had to do with a silly ignorant multitude, already engag'd in many superstitions, and prone to any delusion whatever, and that they built upon a good ground, *viz.* The veneration of all their Countrymen for Christianity; they were secretly encourag'd, and perhaps directed, by the Popes, who as soon as these new upstarts had brought their dreams to any perfection, and found a competent number of credulous or deceiving followers, did not fail to approve of their dreams, and to give them the force of law. And that both the vulgar and their new Disciples might have a greater Veneration for these Founders of Orders, they

they used to *Canonize* them, and to turn them into Saints, or rather Idols, to open a new door to false miracles and deceptions. The same may be said of all the parts of Popery; that mystic *Babylon* having been built by pieces, and during the course of many ages.

These objections and answers might be carried farther, but the usual compass of these Letters does not allow me to do it at this time. I shall only observe in the close, that if the incredulous complain, that I have borrow'd some historical, but very credible matters out of the new Testament, I'll answer that I am necessitated to do so, until they produce another History of those times as credible and as well circumstantiated as the Gospel and Acts. If they have none, how can they judge of our Divine Jesus, and how dare they be so impudent as to accuse him and his Apostles of deception? It's plain, that they deserve the punishment both of Calumniators and publick Disturbers, or rather Enemies to Mankind; for they do not intend to set up *Mahometism* or *Paganism*, they are too ridiculous Sects; but would, if possible, extinguish all manner of Religion, that people might cut one anothers throats, without remorse or conscience.

Osab. 20th.

L E T-

LETTER XLI.

To the Honoured Dr. Dickinson, of the
Colledge of Physicians of London,

ARGUMENT.

The Necessity of joyning the study of Natural Philosophy with Divinity. That a person in health cannot forbear Meat and Drink beyond a certain term, as 14 days, or perhaps 3 weeks at the utmost, prov'd by physical reasons. What would happen if God should suspend the Law of the Communication of Motion. That miraculous Fasts do probably proceed from such a suspension. Moses's Fast, Christ's Fast and Temptation, Elijah's Fast explain'd. How we shall live in Heaven without eating and drinking? The Cheat of a Nun that pretended to live only upon the Holy Sacrament, how discovered. A strange Story of a young Maid in Darbyshire, supposed to have liv'd 5 years without eating or drinking; attestation of the matter of Fact. Another Story of a Dutch Maid pretended to have liv'd 8 montks without any Meat or Drink. That Religion is not concern'd in these relations. What can make 'em doubtful, in general, in particular, as to the English, and as to the Dutch Maid. What Physical Account might be given of both, in case they were true. The true cause of the Rheum. That the pores of the Transpiration, and those of the Sweat are not all the same.

Honoured Sir,

IF all Physicians had as much insight in Criticks and Divinity as your self, some of 'em would make a better use than they are said

to do of their knowledge in natural things. And I have likewise observ'd that such Divines, as altogether neglect the study of Philosophy, often run to those extreams that expose Religion to the railings of the incredulous. To avoid stumbling against one of these blocks, I sometimes apply my self to the Theoretical part of your Art, seeing by your Books you have been so successful in joyning divine and humane Learning. And I hope you will be so far from finding fault with me, that you will rather encourage me in the attempt.

The study of Natural Philosophy seems to me the more necessary, that I do not see how we can without it give pertinent answers to some objections, which Atheists use to make against the miracles mention'd in the Holy Writ, pretending that they are all either contradictory impossibilities, or only extraordinary things, of which they can, say they, produce many instances.

Physicians do all agree that men cannot live without taking any nourishment, beyond 7, 11, or 14 days; and consequently *Moses*, *Elijah*, and our Saviours fast that lasted 40 natural days, have been look'd upon in all ages as altogether miraculous. However, 'tis objected, that some persons bear fasting longer than others; so that 'tis hard to determine the precise time of every mans power in this. Add to this, that the Stomach may often be full of a viscous matter that blunts and intangles the sharp pointed corpuscles which excite hunger and thirst; besides that there may be form'd some obstruction in the Nerves of the Orifice of the Stomach, that stops the communication betwixt 'em and the Brains.

But after all, a man can scarce live any considerable time in that condition; for we know that all the heterogeneous liquors that circulate and undergo several filtrations, as do the blood and humours of humane bodies, must perpetually subtilize, alter the shapes of their corpuscles, the grossest conglobate into a *caput mortuum*, and the most subtle vanish or transpire through the pores of the body, in which they make their gyrations. And as that *caput mortuum* has yet some spirits or particles capable of a greater subtilization, if the *Rectum* be shrunk or too close, or the body so weak that it has not a sufficient force to expel those excrements, then they will ferment by their own weight and the remaining natural heat, and send fumes up to the Brain, that shall create a fever, transport or madness; whilst the rest of the Body shall grow extremely weak and lean, because the sharp corpuscles that do perpetually increase, by the repeated circulations of the humours and blood, without new aliment to repair the evaporated particles, will feed upon the most tender parts of the flesh and fat.

These

These are, methinks, the natural consequences of a long fasting. But will it be said, how will you then explain miraculous fasts? Very easily; for I have but to suppose a Truth, which I can metaphysically demonstrate, *viz.* That God is not only the first mover, but also the Author of the communication and perpetuation of motion. That is to say, that Matter is of it self impenetrable and unmovable; so that if God were pleas'd to suspend the act of his will, by which Matter moves, if the whole Universe be full, then all would remain unmovable, but in the same state in which it was at the moment of the suspension: whereas if there be void spaces interspersed amongst bodies, then they would descend to the center of the World, as far as their shapes would allow, until all the vacuities were replenished.

I suppose, that in the bodies of men, there are as few vacuities as can be conceiv'd; and therefore if God be pleas'd to keep a man miraculously fasting, he has but to suspend the communication of motions in reference to him; that is, to hinder that the Air should make any impression upon him from without, and the blood and humors circulate within his veins; but then that man ought to appear as dead, or to remain in a perpetual Ecstasy, to whose continuance it is only requir'd that the blood should softly transpire and transmit to the brain a few number of Spirits, or very subtle particles, to keep it in a state of consistency.

Thus *Moses's* and *Christ's* fasts may be ascrib'd to that Extatic power, or suspension of natural motions; for the writing of the ten Commandments on the two Tables was done by God himself. And as to *Moses* talking with God, (a) we read of no answer he made, (a) *Exod.* but only of some few words he spake at the beginning of the Ecsta-^{xxxiv. 4,}fy: all the rest is represented as spoken by God, so that the Pro-^{28.}phet's Body lack'd only some few Spirits to keep his Brains fit for perceptions and Idea's.

The power of the Ecstasy is yet more sensible in our Saviours fast. The words of the Original run thus: *Then was Jesus brought by the Spirit into the wilderness, that he might be tempted by the Devil: and having fasted 40 days and 40 nights, at last he hunger'd. And the tempter, coming near him, said, if thou art the Son of God, &c.* It has ever been the custom of pious men, when they entred into the Holy Ministry to separate themselves from the world for a time, that they might consider of the importance of their undertaking, implore the assistance of God, and his blessing upon their labours. According to that commendable use, our Lord who was to take upon him the most chargeable office that ever was, to be High Priest and Sovereign

(b) πηγ.
διναία πρὸ
τῷ διαβό-
λῳ, ten-
tandus a
Diabolo.

Prophet, or universal and infallible Teacher of mankind, to redeem and convert the World, retir'd into a solitary place, by the direction of the Spirit, or of the infinite Wisdom to which he was united, tho he knew he should there be tempted by the Devil (b) ; but that did not frighten him from his duty, because he was as sure of the victory as of the fight. Being come thither, he fell into an extatic ravishment, contemplating during 40 days and 40 nights the great and deep mysteries he was going to perform. At the end of the Ecstasy, his body resuming his natural functions, he felt the sharpness of hunger. And 'twas in that weak state, the most intolerable that can be conceiv'd, that God allow'd the enemy of mankind to approach him ; but all the craft and fair pretensions of that old Seducer avail'd nothing, and he being overcome and forc'd to fly from our Divine Hero, was succeeded by good Angels, who by their ready services acknowledg'd *Jesus* for their Lord and Master.

(c) 1 Kings
xix. 8.

As to the fast of *Elijah* (c), it proceeds from a different cause ; for the H. Writ mentions expressly, that *by the strength of that meat*, which had been given him by an Angel, he was sustain'd 40 days and 40 nights, tho he made a great journey in the mean while, viz. from the desarts of *Beersheba* to the Mountain of *Horeb*. There is none, I believe, who doubts, but God, or an Angel by his order and direction, can prepare such food as shall keep up a man so long a time.

It's commonly believ'd, that we shall neither eat nor drink, after the day of Judgment, tho we shall then have a body with all the integral and essential parts of this. I do not remember any formal passage of the H. Scripture, on which this opinion may be grounded. Contrariwise, it is observ'd that Christ eat and drank twice with his Disciples after his Resurrection, *Luke xxiv. 42, 43. Joh. xxi. 13, 14*. However, since this notion seems to be a necessary consequence of the future incorruptibility of our Bodies, I explain it thus : viz. That they shall not be made up of such tender and separable parts as they are now, neither shall they be nourish'd by heterogeneous humors, that must needs undergo several filtrations, but the Liquor running through our veins, shall be a most pure and homogeneous substance, affording plenty of Spirits, which shall be continually repair'd, by the sweet *Æther* we shall respire.

By this small Essay you may see what great agreement there is betwixt Divinity and sound Philosophy. But as to counterfeits most of 'em have been discover'd, and their Authors cover'd with shame, or at least are still easy to be discern'd from true miracles. Such a cheat was the fast of a Nun in *Flanders*, who 80 years ago, pretended to live upon nothing save the H. Sacrament. This was believ'd

believ'd for a great while, and the false Nun look'd upon as a Saint. But one morning coming to confession to an honest plain Priest; your breath, said he, smells of Brandy. You may think in what rage this put the she deceiver, that he should presume to destroy a miracle that made so much noise, and brought her and her Monastery so great a credit. The Priest therefore endeavour'd to pacify her, so that she came to him a second time, when finding the same thing, he advis'd the Bishop of it, and told him withal, that our age, and a place so near *Holland*, were not proper for such deceits, which could not fail to be discover'd at one time or other, and cause a very great scandal. Hereupon the Bishop sent for the Nun, lock'd her up, and in a little time found out the cheat, viz. That one of the Sisters gave her Meat, Drink and Spirits, unknown to any one. When the Prelate pretended to chide the Nun, she answer'd it was well done of her, and she was ready to undertake this, or any other pious fraud to magnify her Convent.

But leaving those Abusers of Religion to the Judgment of God, I shall set down here two Histories, that are together so well attested and so incredible, that I hardly know what to say of 'em, and therefore would be glad that you were pleas'd to inform me farther, either as to the matter of fact, or as to the possibility of such Phenomena.

The first has been communicated to me by a Physician of quality and great repute, Sir *Theodore de Vaux*, Fellow of the *Royal Society*, &c. who relates nothing, but what himself has seen and heard. And therefore I think fit to give you the history in his own words.

August 25. 1673. Being at *Chatsworth* at the Earl of *Devonshire's*, he telling me of the strange case of *Martha Tayler*, that fasted so long; I being curious to see this person, he was pleas'd to send one with me to her habitation, which was at a place call'd *Over-Hadden*, some two miles from *Chatsworth*, in *Derbyshire*. When I came to her Mothers house, a poor Cottage, at the bottom of a great Hill, I found this *Martha Tayler* just arising, being about nine in the morning; and in a very little time she was brought by the fire side, and set in a Chair, where I began to tell her, that the Earl of *Devonshire* had sent me thither to see her, and I desir'd that she would give me a true relation of all what had past in her distemper. She spoke to me as one much beholding to his Honor, for his Charity towards her, and so promis'd me by the help of God she would say nothing but truth. She told me she was 22 years old last *Candlemas*, and until the age of eleven years she was very healthful, and was as other persons us'd to be; that about that time, angring a Neighbour of hers upon the fighting of two Cocks, he struck her a great blow

upon the reins of her back, which made her complain of a great weakness. She fell then ill for the first time, and was seiz'd with a violent Hickock, that by fits would last her three hours together, and the noise she made with it was incredible. Thus ill she continued for 14 days together, afterwards grew pretty well, so that she went to School for 10 days. Then she fell ill again, and had great risings within her, which made great noise, being as she conceiv'd wind, which would rise up to her Throat, and would cause her to lie in a Trance; yet after 14 days she got pretty well again, and went to School for 10 days more, but being at School was much troubled with the Hickock still, both by day and night. After these 10 days she fell ill for the third time, and then kept her Bed for six years together, being in a very bad condition, yet all these six years time she did eat and drink all kind of things, and did go to stool and urine as she us'd to do, but the Hickock tormented her by fits every day, making that noise that one might hear her, they say, a quarter of a mile off, or a very great way. The Doctors that then saw her, were of opinion, that she was in a Hectique Fever, tho she drunk but little, and sweated little. The two last years of these six, she perceiv'd much blood mixt with her urine, so far that one could not tell whether it was blood or urine. This brought her very low and faint, so that she expected every day when she should die; and at that time something came down out of her privy parts, very big, and in sundry long guts as it were, one of them was very long, grisly and hard, and blood in the end of it, and what came down was sever'd, so that she put several Clouts between each other, and she anointed them with Cream. She could not tell what these things were that came down, they were dry and no moisture in them; some said they were her guts, others that one was the bladder and the other the womb. However it be, in time they putrified, but did not smell ill, some part came out and moulded away, and some other part got up into her body again. For three years time these guts, as she call'd them, were so painful and troublesom to her, that she never stirr'd out of her posture; lying still on her right side, and she was once for nine weeks together, that she never slept at all; but still would be reading godly books, hearing them read, or discoursing with persons upon good things, never losing her memory or senses in the least, though she was so long without sleep.

After the two last years of her bloody urine, upon a sudden that ceas'd; then she fell into a great vomiting, and from *Michelmass* day, *September 29th*, 1657. to *St. Andrews* day, *November 30th*, 1667. she vomited up all she took, and when they would force something down,

down, it would lie in her throat, and being ready to choak her would come up again. In this time of her vomiting she went very little to stool. At *St. Andrews* day the vomiting ceas'd, and from that day unto *St. Thomas* day she took no sustenance at all, neither any kind of meat or drink, but lay quiet and had a little sleep, but all this time had no evacuation, neither by Stool nor urine. Upon *St. Thomas* day, *December 21st*, 1667. in the evening, she took three slices of an Apple; after this for five years together, she took no kind of sustenance, but the wetting of her Lips with Water, or a little Syrup of Prunes, or a drop of Claret Wine; however it could never be perceiv'd that she let down one drop of liquor. She would now and then suck a Raisin or a stew'd Prune; sometimes some of the solid parts of the Prune would get down. In all these five years she had no evacuation, neither by stools or urine, but she said that frequently she had bleedings out of her Eyes, and out of her Ears and Nose, and now and then would vomit blood.

At *Christmas* day, *December 25*, 1672. she began to take some Ale, with a bit of an Apple. At the beginning she would use little sops, but would vomit them up again; however continuing still, it did by degrees stay with her, and then she would take some mellow Pear or an Apple. In 1673, she took during the Summer, a pretty store of Gooseberries; and when she had once begun to eat and drink, had also some small evacuation by stool twice a week, and pretty hard, and by urine every day a little, about the quantity of two ounces. When *Sir Theodore* saw her, she could, as she said, take one day with another about a quarter of a pint of Ale, and eat some Gooseberries, or a little Apple, or some Pear, but could not let down any substantial meat, neither would Milk stay with her, but she vomited it up again, as she did also if she eat too much of any of those fruits. The Hickock did not trouble her any more.

As to her body, continues our ingenuous Friend, she is lean, although her face big and fleshy; her belly is all shrunk up, and there is great hollownes as if there were no intestines at all; so that if there be any they must be all shriveled up, for there is no appearance of them; her chest, or breast, is mighty high, her arms are lean, and from her elbow upwards the bone is crooked, especially the right arm, so that she has but little use of it; her thighs are hollow, and there is little flesh on her knees; the bones are very big, and so are the joints, as if she had had the Rickets, and yet she says, and her friends too, that being a Child she was free from that distemper. Her legs are lean; she never sweats but in the palms of her hands, that are almost always moist; her pulse good, but something quick;

quick; she has a good chearful countenance, talks very rationally, and very good sense, has a very good memory, and truly all she says appears to me to be nothing but truth, making great profession of Religion, and having read much, and conversed with many Godly persons, as she says, that were so charitable as to come and see her: I askt her whether she was not let blood during that time she voided so much blood by her urine? She answer'd no, because she was so weak, that they thought she would dye: but in the beginning of her sickness she was once blooded. In the time of her fasting, September 4, 1668, the Earl of *Devonshire* had sundry persons that watcht with her for 7 days and 6 nights together, to see if she took any thing, and as two went out, two came in: They are all credible persons, and some the Earl of *Devonshire's* Servants. Their names are, *Hannah Hollis*, *Dorothy Webster*, *Alice Trantor*, *Mary Jones*, *Elizabeth Glassop*, *Joan Heath*, *Anne Taylour*, *Anne Bott of Bake-well*, *Anne Berisford*, *Ruth Gates*, *Seath White*, *Mary Goodwin* and *Dorothy Shelden*, *Sarah Burton* Mr. *Wilson's* Maid, *Hester Hatfeld*, *Mary Coates*, *Hester Rydeyard*, *Eliz. Toft*, *Eliz. Wane*, and Mr. *Buxston's* Maid *Barbary Mosely*, *Anne Webster*, *Eliz. Milner* and *Eliz. Wolle*.

October 26, 1668. She was examined by Mr. *Edward Wood* Apothecary, and *Catherine Lister* Midwife in *Auport*, who subscribed an attestation of the matter of fact as Witnesses, together with *George Broadhurst* of *Overhadden*, whose Certificate I have in my hands.

The 2^d history is related by Mr. *Cornelius Stalpart Vander Wiel* Physician at the *Hague*, in his curious Observations, printed in the *Dutch* tongue at the *Hague*, 1686. It is extracted out of a Letter written by Mr. *Herman Van Eybergen* Minister of *Diepenheim*, in the Province of *Overysfel*, to Mr. *Bruinstein*, Physician to his Royal Highness the Prince of *Orange*, now our Gracious King *William III.* and dated July 31. 1683.

A Maid born at *Helselaar*, a Village depending on the Lordship of *Berkelo*, in the Month of *September* 1667, took a Quartan Ague at *Zwol*, where she was a Maid Servant, in the Month of *May* 1682. After 7 weeks she went to *Diepenheim* to a Relation of hers. The first days she was there, she went sometimes abroad, and all her disease seem'd to consist in the said Fever. But in the mean while, she grew weaker every day, and lost her stomach by degrees, eating nothing else besides raw Fruits as Apples and Rapes: So that after a month she was so very sick and weak, that her death was expected at every moment, and it was impossible to let her take any sort of food, in so much that she was a month without eating and drinking, without changing her bed, or discharging her self in any manner

manner of visible excrements. But from time to time she was troubled with such violent fits, that she struck her head against the walls or the boards of her bed, and would have fallen down, if care had not been taken. And as they had put Cushions on both sides of her Pillow, to prevent unhappy accidents, she bit 'em violently during her fits, and 'could not suffer to be holden fast, especially by the head, for then her pain would redouble upon her. The Minister who has written this Relation, testifies to have seen her attack'd with those Convulsion fits, four times within an hour.

Having thus remained a month in her first bed, she was taken up in her sheet, and put upon a Bed-stead on the ground, where she lay yet 3 or 4 weeks, it being not possible to remove her, because her nerves were grown so rigid, that to touch her was to increase her pains to a terrible excess. In vain it was attempted to give her in some Broth or Beer, for nothing could go through her Throat, or if she chanced to swallow some drop of liquor, she had no repose until she had cast it out of her Breast with violent efforts. The apples of her Eyes sunk so deep into her head, that they could hardly be seen, and at last her Eye-lids were shut up, without possibility of opening them. All the comfort she had was to sleep in the evening till 12 at clock in the night, and again an hour or two about 3 or 4 in the afternoon. This long fast, accompany'd with Convulsion-fits, troubled her Head at a strange rate: for she often rav'd and call'd for Cakes, Apples and Plums, which were hung accordingly with nails against the walls of her Bed, and rot there for the might well by whiles count 'em for her diversion, but could not diminish their number by eating of 'em.

April 13. 1683. her Father transferr'd her from *Diepenheim* to *Helslaar*, where 3 days after, viz. on the night betwixt the 16 and 17 she took a fancy to drink, and call'd her Father for it; but as she could not waken him, she fell again to sleep. In the morning she told her Father what her desire had been, and that she had a strong conceit she should recover her sight in a short time. Her Father gave her a little Wine, which she took and staid with her, without making her uneasy. An hour after, she bid her Father to kindle a light, because she fancied to see something. He did it, and approaching the Candle near her Eyes, he perceiv'd her Eye-lids to be half open. The patient would have open'd them with her fingers, but could not. On the same day, which was the 47, since her Eye-lids had been shut up, she open'd them intirely on a sudden, by the motion of her Head, but they clos'd up themselves again, for 3 or 4 days more, when she was able to open them with her fingers. April 27, she began to eat a little.

a little white Bread with Honey. The following day she took a fancy to eat Bacon, and whilst it was a frying, her longing carry'd her so far as to eat some of it raw. On the 4th of *May*, she began to make water, and on the tenth to have stools. Her fits also diminish'd by degrees, and she had strength enough to stand upright, and to walk upon Crutches; but she was yet a month that she could not sit down, without falling into a swoon. After that she was also rid of that uneasiness, and as soon as she could sit down, she went to *Helselaar's Church*, and then to *Diepenheim*, where our Minister saw her and writ again to Mr. *Bruinstein*, that to restore her to a perfect health, there wanted only something to strengthen her Stomach, that could not as yet well digest.

It must be confest, that these Relations are as strange as any thing that was ever printed with an appearance of Truth, and few people will be apt to believe them; but whatever be their fate, Religion is not concern'd with it. For *Moses*, *Elijah* and *Jesus* were in perfect health, both at the beginning and the end of their fast; and it remains still undoubted, that no man in health can fast so long. But what a sickness can produce, we are now to inquire. There are indeed several things, which can make these stories suspicious. 1. We have properly nothing to ground them upon, save the testimony of the patients and their friends; for Sir *Theodore's* relation is but what he had from the mouth of the *English Maid*. As to those that watcht her by order of the Earl of *Devonshire*, it was but for 7 days; besides, who knows not that the best watch in the world is apt to slumber sometimes? It's true they were two at once, but 'tis true also, that it has been said that they gave her Milk in the evening. She answer'd to Sir *Theodore*, who question'd her over it, that it was only to besmear those suppos'd Guts that went out of her body. Whatever be of that, the stew'd Prunes and the Raisins she suck'd were for another use; without mentioning the Syrup of Prunes and the Claret Wine, whereby her lips were, as she said, wetted: So that upon the whole, her fast cannot be taken for rigorous, or a perfect privation of whatever can repair the living Spirits. 2. The fasting of the *Dutch Maid* was stricter, tho not the seventh part so long as that of the *English*; but we have only her own word, or that of her friends for it; since Mr. *Van Eybergen*, who saw her in her Convulsion-fits, did never watch her one day. Besides, that those Cakes, Apples, Pears, Plums, &c. which she ask'd for in her ravings, and us'd to hang over her head, do somewhat spoyle the notion of a long fast.

In the history of *Martha Taylor*, there are many particulars, which will increase the suspicions of the incredulous. 1. The original cause of her sickness, a blow upon her back by an angry neighbour seems to insinuate some bewitching. For my part, I am perswaded that there may be men wicked enough to make compacts with evil Spirits, who perhaps teach or give them Poysons of an unimaginable subtilty and hurtfulness. But the effects of those poysons use to be very different from the symptoms of this Maid. However as there are several venoms whose effects are unknown to us, I will not insist upon this objection. 2. The Hickock that vex'd her so long, and was heard so far off, about a quarter of a mile, is another incredible Circumstance; not that I believe there was nothing of it, but I am apt to conjecture from this visible *Hyperbole*, that there are many others in the account she gave to our ingenious friend, and that she pleased her self in raising the admiration as well as the pity of her Visitors: and who knows but she got something by it? In 1673. she lived in a poor Cottage; now she is married to a Physician; and My Lord *Sherard* of *Darbyshire* writ lately (in the month of *September*) to Sir *Theodore de Vaux* that she was found to be an Impostor. However I would be glad to know how and by whom. 3. Those supposed Guts, that for three years together came out of her privy parts, are also very mysterious. If they were the guts, the womb or the bladder, how could she eat, digest, urin, or even live afterwards? If they were something else, what could supply so much matter, whilst she eat and drank nothing? 4. To be 5 years fasting, 9 weeks lacking sleep, and to preserve withal a good memory and the free use of her senses, appear to me as probable as the fable of the Mice, making their nest in the ear of a Cat. 5. Tears come oft out of the eyes, and there uses to sit in the middle of the ears a viscous matter, which I rather believe to be squeez'd out of the substance of the ears by sweating, than to be transpired through the Tympanon: but as to blood coming out of the eyes and ears, I never heard of it, tho I am not so learn'd in Physick, as to deny the possibility of the fact.

Let's now proceed to the *Dutch Maid*. Matters hang pretty well together in this relation. The learnedst Physicians agree in ascribing the next cause of intermittent Fevers, to a viscous matter, which mixing at set times with the blood, retards its circulation. At the beginning of her disease, this matter was already so abundant in her, as to produce a Quartan Ague of very long continuance; but it was so extraordinarily increas'd by the raw fruits she eat immoderately, that after 3 months it fill'd up her stomach, overpower'd

the blood, and stopt the pores of the transpiration. Then she must of necessity lose her stomach; but the circulation continuing still, tho very slowly, out of the filtration of the blood and humors must needs arise some sharp corpuscles, which finding no passage, struck against the solid parts of her body, until they had blunted their points, and fell again into the viscous matter, with some particles of the flesh they had broken off; and therefore she ought to grow leaner every day, and her Convulsion fits be follow'd with ravings. But at long run the viscous matter being consum'd, because some of the sharp corpuscles forc'd from time to time their passage through the stopt pores, she ought to recover her stomach and health as she did.

One thing only appears to me very difficult, which is how she was transferr'd from *Diepenheim* to *Helselaar*; for tho those two Villages are but at some miles distance, yet how could she be carry'd so far, since she was grown so very lean and rigid by her long fast and the stopping of her pores, that she could not suffer to be brought from one bed into another, and that a good while after she had begun to eat and to recover her health, she could not sit down without falling into a swoon.

The story of the *English* Maid has more difficulties in it; however I believe the main matter of fact to be true, for all the circumstances can hardly be so. That is, her fast was really so long as 'tis reported, tho nothing near so strict and rigorous as that of the *Dutch* Maid: But the juice of some Raisins and stew'd Prunes, a drop of Claret Wine or Milk, and some such little things, that would scarce be able to keep a Chicken, were reckon'd for nothing, either out of pity or admiration: And therefore, setting bewitching aside, what origin soever her distemper may have had, I believe that the next cause of her long fasting was a viscous matter, and the stopping of the transpiration-pores, not only because of some light resemblance betwixt the two *Phenomena*, but especially, because 'tis observed that she eat all sorts of things, that is, they gave her fat Meat, or full of gravy; good thick and fat Broth, strong Beer, and the like, which are as apt to create Viscosities in a weak Stomach, as any raw fruits. If her fasting lasted longer than that of the *Dutch* Maid, it is because the nourishment she took, tho in a very small quantity, hindered the clammy humour from being so quickly consum'd.

But because I perceive that Gentlemen are divided in their opinions of this Maid, I shall set down a *Criterion*, or a mark, by which the truth may, methinks, infallibly be known. She began to be sick at eleven years of age, and continu'd so till about 23, after which
women

women do not use to grow. During the 5 years of her fasting, 'tis certain she could not grow at all; neither could she become much taller, during the other 7 years, she was so sorely vex'd with the hickock, blood mix'd with her urine, vomiting, want of sleep, &c. And therefore if she be still about the same stature that she was when eleven years old, there is apparently no cheat in the main. But if she be much taller, we have reason to suspect the worst.

The grand objection that can be made against those conjectures, is how a man can live, the pores of his transpiration being stopp'd? To which I answer, that they have been so for the most part, perhaps in all those who make the objection, and that too for a considerable while, and as oft as they had catcht a great Cold or Rheum, that made 'em lose their Stomach. For the Rheum does not always proceed from abundance of humours, otherwise every ordinary Physic or Sudorific would cure us of it. But it arises from a viscus matter, that mixes with the Chyle and Blood, and partly stops the pores of the transpiration; which stopping, if it come to be encreas'd from without by the thickness and intemperance of the air, the superfluous humours that were to be exhal'd by the transpiration, mix again with the Chyle and Blood; and then nature, or that power which God has given to our bodies, to restore themselves into their former state to a certain degree, endeavours to expel those humours through the lungs and nostrils with violent efforts of the breast and brain.

It's vulgarly imagin'd that the transpiring and sweating pores are all one, but this I dare averto be an error. 1. We may easily procure sweating when we have got the heaviest cold, but that will rather endanger us than allay the disease, either because sweating does not dilute the viscus matters that are the original cause of the Rheum, or that we transpire through other pores, besides those of the sweat. 2. Tho we sweat, yet the pores of our nostrils, through which we have the sensation of odors, and those of the orifice of the stomach, through which the sensation of hunger and thirst is communicated to the brain, remain quite or almost stopp'd. We are only aware of the stopping of those two parts, but who can tell that many others are not so? Especially seeing that out of the stopp'd nostrils flow abundance of humours. 3. If the pores of the transpiration and those of the sweat were the same, we ought to eat more in Summer than in Winter, in hot than in cold weather; whereas 'tis just, when the cool East and North winds blow, that we have a better stomach. 4. Tho we have stools and urine as much and sometimes more than ordinary, when we are troubled

with Rheum, yet the humors of which nature does discharge it self, amount to a far greater quantity than those of the other excrements. 5. We imagine that a Physick, which does strongly operate, rids us of a great many superfluous humors; but 'tis a mistake, for it only brings down the humours that were ready to transpire; however it may happen to cure us by carrying away such humours as were too thick and clammy, to be transpired. 6. Such a plenitude of humours, as is cast out by the Rheum or a strong Physick, would suffocate and kill the strongest man in the world within three days; and therefore this plenitude is the effect, and not the cause of the Rheum, and is made up immediately of the matters that were to be transpired.

Thence I conclude, that since the pores of the transpiration can be stopp'd, and that neither the time nor the degree of that stopping is determin'd, they can have been so in the two Maids above-mention'd, and that too for a longer time than we are apt to believe, and that therefore the main of their story may be true.

October 28.

LET.

LETTER XLII.

To the Reverend Mr. William Hart,
Rector of Walpoole in Marshland.

A R G U M E N T.

Why Marshland breeds no Rats. Description of that Country, and the Isle of Ely. Of the nature and various species of Rats. That the vapours of the stagnating Waters, and the steams of the Soyl are the cause that they cannot abide there. What sort of exhalations those are. Why other Animals do notwithstanding thrive in that Country. What sorts of Talismans are effectual? Farther proofs of the matter of Fact.

Reverend Sir,

I Never doubted of the matter of fact, over which you did me the honour to ask my opinion, namely, that *your Country breeds no Rats*, and if they come accidentally by goods brought into it, they presently languish and dye, without any visible cause for it. A man in your station, who writes with so much sense and judgment, and has been often an eye-witness of what he relates, is not to be questioned in a simple matter of fact. And therefore I would have ere now answer'd your obliging Letter, were it not that I wanted Camden's *Britannia*; and that in my present circumstances, I cannot always find a Book so rare, and of so great a price.

Now having recover'd it, I shall set down, as the foundation of my answer, what that learned man says of the Soyl of your Country (a). (a) Camd.
Brit. Lond.

Over against Linne, on the farther side of the River (Ouse) lies Marsh-land, a little moist, marshy Country, as the name implies, divided and Fol. 1610.
P. 481.
parted

parted every where with Ditches, Trenches and Furrows, to drain and draw the Waters away. A soyl standing upon a very rich and fertile mould, and breeding abundance of Cattel; so that in a place call'd Tilneysmeth, there feed much about 30000 Sheep; but so subject to the beating and overflowing of the roaring main Sea, which very often breaks, tears and troubles it so grievously, that it can hardly be kept off with chargeable walls and works.

He gives a character very approaching of the Isle of Ely, which is adjacent to Marshland, in these words, p. 241. The farther and Northern part, because it is fennish ground, by reason of the many floods that the Rivers cause, and so dispers'd into Islands, is called the Isle of Ely, a tract extraordinary green, fresh and gay, by reason of most plenteous pastures; however in some sort hollow, because of the waters that in some places secretly enters in, and even when it overflows, surrounds most part of it.

And p. 491. The whole Country in Winter, and sometimes most part of the Year, is overflown by the Rivers Ouse, Grant, Nen, Welland, Glene and Witham, having not loades and sewers large enough to discharge themselves. But when the streams are retired within their own Channels, it is so plenteous and rank of a certain fat, gross and ful hay, which they call lid, that when they have mowen down, as much as will serve their turns, they set fire on the rest, and burn it in November, that it may come up again in greater abundance.

That such a fennish Country cannot be very wholesom is a plain consequence in Physick, which agrees too well, as you know, with the experience of Strangers, that is, of all such who are not born and bred there. And that it has been so ever since it was inhabited, appears by one *Fælix* a Writer of good antiquity; which seems to comprehend your *Marshland*, in the description he makes of those Fens.

His words are thus quoted by my Author. There is a Fen of exceeding largeness, which beginning at the banks of the River Grant, arising some where with sedg plots, in other places with black waters yielding a duskyish vapour, &c.

The very Fishes, which these Waters breed, are sickly, if we believe *William*, a Monk of Crowland.

Gurgite tetro

Morbosos pisces vegetans.

The next thing I have to do is to inquire into the nature and various species of Rats, as far as is material to the question in hand.

We use to confound Mice and Rats in the common language, tho they are two different species. The former are gray, small and
wea,

weak, and breed so prodigiously that *Aristotle* relates a Mouse included in a Vessel with Millet brought forth 120 little ones. And I remember to have read somewhere, that in 1648, an incredible number of Mice overflow'd the County of *Essex*, and would have wasted all, but that there came soon after great quantities of Owls, which rid the Country of it. They use to gnaw dry bread, ends of candle, and if they find nothing else, papers and goods. Rats are browner, bigger and stronger, and sometimes make bold to defend themselves against Cats, especially by troops, tho the fight proves, for the most part, very unequal, and ends with the rout and slaughter of the Rats. They are both a very dainty bit, which is the cause of the Cats taking so much pains to hunt after them, even when they disdain other meat. And to this purpose I remember a story, that I was told by a worthy Gentleman in *Holland*: A neighbour of his had a Child of 4 or 5 years of age, who, notwithstanding all the trouble she took, could not be taught to ask when he would go to stool. She observing that his excrements were extraordinarily dilute, suspected at last that it came out of weakness, and went to a Physician for counsel, who advised her to feed him with broil'd Mice and young Rats, adding that she ought not to be afraid of it, and that having cut off their head and tail, she might freely give them to him under the notion of Birds. She did it, the Child eat greedily the supposed Birds, long'd often for them, and was cur'd within a fortnight. In *Provence*, I have my self eaten Mountain or Field-rats, which in Autumn are extraordinary fat and tender, and go there for excellent meat, being not at all venomous. The Inhabitants use to hunt them with Fire arms, under Walnut Trees, upon which these Animals use to climb to eat the Nuts. I have also read of Water-rats, which skulk on the sides of Ponds and Rivers, and feed upon the Fish; but I never saw any of them, and by the description of Authors it appears, that they do not frequent *blackish waters, yielding a dusky vapor, and whose Fishes are sickly*. As to the Mice and Rats that infest our Houses, it seems that they care not to drink, unless they be poyson'd.

Thence I conclude that the most probable cause, why Mice and Rats cannot abide your Country, are the moist unwholsom vapours, which are continually steam'd out of it.

I joyn moist and unwholsome together, because the vapours of running Rivers, and those that form dew and rain, are healthful to many Animals, especially at certain times; whereas I know not of any, unless it be Toads and Frogs, and a few Fishes, that can endure the noisom smell of stagnating Waters. It would be a piece of presumption
in

in a Stranger, that never liv'd in *Marshland*, to determine precisely wherein that unwholsomeness does consist. Waters that overflow a Country carry several heterogeneous matters with them, which when they stagnate undergo various fermentations. And that the fermentations they suffer in *Marshland* and the Isle of *Ely*, are not very conducive to health, appears by the *blackish colour* of those waters, the *dusky vapours* they yield, and the *fore effect* they produce upon *fishes*, which apparently hinder them to transpire as well as the Rats, whose pores are far thinner. For if you anoint a Fly, a Worm, or any other weak Insect, all over with Oyl, it will dye in a short time, for want of transpiration: Since no other hurt can be imagin'd to proceed from such a sweet and harmless substance as Oyl, than that it stops the pores by its intricate and branched particles. Besides that, your Soyl may be pregnant with saltish, acrimonious, nitrous and sulphureous fossiles, that perpetually emit steams of the same nature; but on the other side render it wonderfully fertile. I am the more inclin'd to this conjecture, that in the Southern parts of *France*, when Husband men will rid their Corn-fields of Moles, a sort of Vermin not very different from Rats, they make upon them little Ovens, with Sodds and Wood under them, at 15 or 20 paces from each other, give time to the Sun to dry them, then put fire to the Wood, which burns the Sodds to a black Powder, that being spread on the surface of the field, makes it fruitful, and frees it from Moles, at least for a year. It may be imagin'd that the smok of the burning Earth choaks those Animals; but 'tis more probable that either that smell, or the saltish particles of the burnt Sodds, mixing with the ground by reason of the Rain, make them run away.

If it be ask'd how other Animals can then live in *Marshland*? I answer. 1. Because they are of a stronger constitution than Mice and Rats, that are very weak creatures, as appears from their frightfulness and the tenderness of their flesh, two infallible tokens of the weakness of Animals. 2. Because the steams of your Country may be poysonous for them and not for others, as pounded Glass, mixt with Grease, or any other meat that those Insects love, will kill them, and not produce that effect upon other Animals.

I know that Ships are often much infested with that Vermin, but Ships are very dry places, and the air of the Sea, especially the Main Ocean, is so far from being unwholsome, that it must be more healthful than that of the firm Land. For where is the Citizen or Countryman that could stand out as many hardships as Seamen undergo, Winds, Tempests, perpetual Agitations, Changes of
Climate,

Climate, and then to feed upon nothing but Salt Meat for many months together.

As to those Gentlemen, who, as you say, ascribe that privation of Mice and Rats to *Talismans*, I will yield something to their opinion, when they can find out the place where these *Talismans* are buried, and having extracted some of 'em, let us see that they are of make fit to replenish the whole Country with steams, during many ages

If so be, that Rats cannot thrive in the Isle of *Ely*, no more than in *Marshland*, I have very near lighted on the true cause of it. Just now I spake with Mr. *Box*, a worthy Gentleman, that has an estate in your Country, and with several others that have been in both places. They all assure me they never saw any Mice or Rats in *Marshland*, or the Isle of *Ely*, ; but could not tell whether or no they can abide there. In the mean while Mr. *Box* gave me such a character of your parts and sincerity, that any one may depend upon the matter of fact.

FINIS.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

TH O I do not use to give *Advertisements* of Books, yet my Bookfellers have lately printed such a useful one, that I thought fit to recommend it to those that love truth and piety. It is intitled, *An Antidote against careless indifferency in Matters of Religion, or a Treatise in opposition to those that believe that all Religions are indifferent, and that it imports not what men believe: With an Introduction by Antony Horneck, D.D. Chaplain in ordinary to their Majesties, 12. London for H. Rhodes. and J. Harris, 1694.*

Gentlemen may continue to direct their Letters to my Lodgings at Mr. Fage's a Turner, in Playhouse yard, near the Thistle and Crown, in Blackfriars,

FINIS.